

Casey: Iraq Progressing Amid Violence, Commanders Flexible on Strategy



Iraqi and U.S. Army soldiers conduct a cordon and search operation in Mushada, Iraq, on Oct. 3, 2006, to gather information on terrorist cells operating in the area. The U.S. Army soldiers are with 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment, 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team. The Iraqi army soldiers are with 4th Battalion, 1st Brigade, 4th Iraqi Army Division. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Eli J. Medellin.)

Military leaders in Iraq are constantly reviewing their strategy and adapting it as needed. Gen. George W. Casey Jr., the Coalition military leader in Iraq, said the broad strategy – that Coalition forces may draw down as Iraqi forces ramp up – is still valid.

“We will continue to look tactically at what’s happening on the ground, and my subordinate commanders will work to deal with that,” Casey said at a press conference at the Pentagon with Secretary Rumsfeld on Oct. 11.

Iraqi army training continues to go well, Casey said, with six of the 10 Iraqi divisions, 30 of the 36 brigades and almost 90 of the 112 battalions in the lead in military operations. Nine months ago, there was one division, four brigades and 23 battalions.

Casey said he disagrees with critics who say Iraq is in a civil war. He said most of the sectarian violence in the country occurs within a 30-mile radius of Baghdad, with some violence in Diyala Province and in Basra. “The idea that the country is aflame in sectarian violence is just not right. I don’t subscribe to the civil war idea,” he said. (Link to American Forces Press Service [story](#).)

Maliki’s New Plan to Reduce Violence Called “Significant Step”

A new four-point plan to reduce sectarian violence in Iraq is being called a “significant step in the right direction.”

Released by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, the plan aims to unite Shiite and Sunni parties to reduce and ultimately stop growing sectarian violence that is threatening Iraq. Specifically, Maliki’s plan calls for:

- Commissions to be established in every Baghdad district, made up of representatives of every part as well as religious and tribal leaders and security officials to serve as consultants on security matters;
 - A common new information mission to monitor the media; and
 - Monthly meetings to evaluate the plan’s performance and make adjustments as needed.
- The action shows Iraq’s leaders want the country to succeed, said U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and Gen. George W. Casey Jr. (Link to AFPS [story](#).)

Provincial Reconstruction Teams Key Component of Helping Iraq Rebuild

- Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Iraq are working together to help Iraq become a prosperous nation.
- The PRTs consist of civil, military and aid organizations. The PRTs are divided into four areas: governance, rule of law, reconstruction and economic development.
- Currently there are seven PRTs in Iraq. U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad visited Forward Operating Base Warhorse in Baqubah to open the Diyala Province PRT on Oct. 5.
- Ultimately 10 PRTs will be operating around the country.
- Some PRT training programs focus on governance, helping to provide direction and guidance for local councils. Governance is a key step to achieving unity and prosperity in Iraq, U.S. Army Maj. Gen. William Caldwell said Oct. 2.
- PRTs are also working to fix Iraq’s dilapidated and neglected infrastructure, including electricity distribution, water quality, and hospitals and health clinics. (AFPS [story](#); MNF-Iraq [story](#), [story](#))



Maj. Lawendowski, from the Alaskan National Guard, assembles a swing set for Iraqi children living in an impoverished neighborhood in Al Hillah Iraq. (Official DoD photo) ([story](#))